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TAGS: PREL PTER KPAL KWBG UNSC IS

SUBJECT: GAZA: UNSC DEFERS PRST DISCUSSION UNTIL THURSDAY
BUT FOURTEEN COUNTRIES SUPPORT REVISED TEXT

REF: A. USUN 63 (NOTAL)

1B. USUN 64

11. (SBU) The UN Security Council met on January 23 to continue discussions on the draft Presidential Statement (PRST) on the situation in Gaza prepared by the Arab group in New York and tabled by Libya. Following a meeting of UNSC political coordinators the morning of January 23, in which USUN argued that a PRST was not necessary but several delegations nevertheless proposed amendments to the draft, the Libyan delegation introduced a revised version of the PRST during afternoon UNSC consultations at the Perm Rep level that "called on all parties to immediately cease all acts of violence, including the firing of rockets into Israeli territory," noted "Israel's decision to suspend the closure of the crossing points and called for it to be fully implemented," and "welcomed the proposal made by the PA to assume responsibility for the Palestinian side of the Gaza Strip border crossing points." (Note: Revised text e-mailed to IO/UNP. End Note.)

12. (SBU) After the Libyans circulated the text, the fourteen other UNSC delegations besides USUN expressed support for it and urged that the Council adopt a statement on Gaza as soon as possible. Several delegations, including France, Italy, the UK, Russia, China, Croatia, and Belgium, expressed a willingness to make further changes to the text if that would help the Council reach agreement. But Russia and China cautioned that any changes should not distract the PRST from its focus on the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Amb Wolff continued to argue against a PRST in principle, explaining that there did not seem to be a common appreciation of the causes and the overall context of the current situation. He also noted that the revised text still did not condemn the ongoing rocket firings since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, it did not address the illegal seizure of power in Gaza by Hamas in June 2007, nor did it recognize the humanitarian situations in both Gaza and southern Israel. France was most supportive of the U.S. position, noting that although the revised text had brought some balance to the text, the Council should continue its work on January 23 in order to reach consensus.

13. (SBU) The Libyan PR, noting the influx of Palestinians into Egypt earlier on January 23 had made the situation a threat to regional stability, bemoaned the Council's inability to respond quickly to the situation on the ground. He then announced that the Council would reconvene at 1100 EST on January 24 to continue discussions on the draft PRST and expressed the expectation that all delegations would have received instructions on the text by that time.

KHALILZAD